

Response

A. Introduction

Claims 1-14 were pending in the application prior to entry of the preceding amendments, and *claims 1-14 and 16* are pending now. The Examiner initially rejected the previously-pending claims, citing principally U.S. Patent No. 6,729,331 to Kay. The Examiner additionally objected to the specification as lacking usual headings and inadvertently reciting “tot he” rather than “to the” and admonished Applicants to reference in a new Information Disclosure Statement two background materials not identified in the previously-submitted Information Disclosure Statement.

B. Objections to the Specification

In response to the Examiner’s objections, Applicants have added appropriate headings to the specification. They also have rewritten “tot he” as “to the” as the Examiner proposes. Applicants accordingly believe the Examiner’s objections to the specification are moot and request that the rejections be withdrawn.

C. The Claims

Described in the Kay patent is a pressure regulator for a demand valve. Breathing air derived from a high-pressure source is controlled by the regulator to reduce its pressure to a level at which it can be supplied, on demand, to a user. Because intended principally for underwater use, the regulator of the Kay patent permits purging of the valve cavity of accumulated *water* as needed by the user. The water purging is thus *not* continuous, but rather occurs *only* when the user depresses a button on the exterior of the valve. See Kay, col. 5, ll. 48-61.

The present invention, by contrast, encompasses a valve assembly for a respirator, with the assembly *functioning to inhibit, if not prevent, flow of exhaled and ambient air back into the respirator*. Included as part of the assembly is an air deflection means arranged in use to supply a curtain of (purge) air over a valve mechanism. The curtain of air urges any potentially-contaminated air away from the user so as to reduce likelihood of undesired air entering the respirator. The curtain thus may be supplied *continuously*, as an on-demand system would allow potentially-contaminated air to enter the respirator.

Applicants have clarified their claims to exploit these significant differences between their invention and the pressure regulator of the Kay patent. Claim 1, for example, now expressly recites that arrangement of the air deflection means “inhibit[s] exhaled and ambient air from flowing into the respirator.” As noted above, this concept is neither disclosed nor suggested by the Kay patent. New claim 16, further, identifies the curtain of air as being provided continuously when the valve assembly is in use, exactly the opposite approach than the on-demand system of the Kay patent. For at least these reasons, Applicants request that claims 1-14 and 16 be allowed.

Supplemental Information Disclosure Statement

Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.56, 1.97, and 1.98, Applicants identify the materials listed below and on the relevant form accompanying this submission:

U.S. PATENT

<u>Number</u>	<u>Inventor</u>	<u>Date</u>
4,574,799	Warncke	March 11, 1986

NON-U.S. PATENT DOCUMENT

<u>Number</u>	<u>Country/Region</u>	<u>Date</u>
1587812	United Kingdom	April 8, 1981

A copy of the British patent document is attached. Applicants do not concede that the identified documents, or either of them, constitute prior art within the meaning of the United States patent laws.

Fees

Attached is authorization to charge a credit card for \$180.00 for the Supplemental Information Disclosure Statement. Applicants believe no other fee presently is due. However, if Applicants' belief is mistaken, the Commissioner is authorized to debit Deposit Account No. 11-0855 for any additional fee due as a consequence of Applicants' submission of this paper.

Conclusion

Applicants request that the Examiner allow claims 1-14 and 16 and that a patent containing these claims issue in due course.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dean W. Russell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dean" being more prominent.

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